

Otto A. Bley Papers

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1892-1902

Title Statement

Otto A. Bley PapersGuide to the Otto A. Bley Papers SC 00868

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Unit Date

1892-1902

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Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical Information:

Further information about this individual or organization may be available in the Special Collections Research Center Wiki: http://scdbwiki.swem.wm.edu/wiki/index.php/Otto_A._Bley.

Scope and Contents

Papers of British Engineer Otto A. Bley, consisting of a manuscript volume (77 pp.), 1898-1902, and 31 letters and certificates, 1892-1902. The manuscript volume served both as diary and account book and pertains to mining exploits in Oregon and Washington State, documenting also the preceding journey across the Prairies to Calgary, then to Banff and Lake Louise and finally to the mines. The letters and certificates provide details of Bley's employment and service on numerous vessels in the merchant navy.

Keywords

Diaries
Journals (accounts)
Letters of recommendation
Gold mines and mining--Oregon
Gold mines and mining--Washington (State)
Mining engineers

Description of Subordinate Components

Diary and accounts

Unit ID id71548

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/204031

Unit Date 1898-1899

Mixed Materials Small Collections Box 51 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Contents

Recorded are such details as hotel names, travel expenses, events and transactions related to his gold mining, value of gold, and work for the Magnolia Mine in Seattle, Washington and Little Giant Gold Mine in Oregon. At the opposite end of the journal are four separately and neatly tallied expenditures. Journal entries date between 21 February 1898 and 19 March 1902 and document a voyage from Liverpool to Quebec on the steamship Tainui and ensuing cross-country journey. He describes some of Canada's now bustling towns in their early stages of growth, and highly coveted natural resources of the Pacific

Northwest. On 2 April 1900, Captain Bley began his journey home, as stated in the journal, by train to Denver, Chicago and New York, from where on the 7th of April he boards the S.S. Lucania sailing to Liverpool. The accompanying papers indicate a continued career in navigation and engineering, as well as involvement in gold mining in South Africa. Pacific Northwest Journey - 20 pages (10 August 1899 - 11 September 1899) Cash in hand - Trip to Oregon August 1899' is Bley's heading as he begins recording his journey to Calgary, Banff, Portland, and his involvement in the gold mines of Oregon. 10 August 1899 - "At 5 PM. started in Albion Line steamer 'Tainui' Captn. Dunlop. Mr. Boyd". 27 August 1899 - "travelling across the prairies, farms & homestead all along the line [...] had a pleasant time chatting with the passengers among them a deputation of 3 gentlemen sent by the government of Finland to explore the country object to send out a large number of settlers from home." Early mention, only ten years from its opening, of the C.P.R. Hotel, now called the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, and a description of the majestic mountain views in the Bow Valley and the nearby sulphur caves. 28 August 1899 - " 9:40 [AM] Arrived at Calgary, a well settled place with good strong buildings about 4000 inhabitants, looks a busy spot...." - " 1 PM Arrived at Banff standing in a lovely valley among hills to 9000 ft high...to C.P.R. Hotel standing a grand plateau about 150 ft above the station, having a magnificent view all around...strong sulphur smell..." On the 1st of September 1899 Bley visits Lake Louise, and on the 3rd he scales Hector Glacier in Banff National Park, which was first climbed only four years prior, then mentions a late arrival at the CPR Glacier House. On the 6th he mentions Revelstoke and the Columbia River, from where he departs the following day for Seattle by steamer, observing the view of Mount Baker. " 8 September 1899 - "Arrived at Portland hotel...some good hints & information...at the Surveyor General's Office that the application for securing patent had never been made by T. K. Muir....Started for Baker City at 8 PM". 10 September 1899 - "In company with Dr Selwyn & Vinson started for Granite & the L.G. [Little Giant] mine. Dr. Selwyn thoroughly examined surface vein & discovery phalt & went through all the workings & shafts the lower being now 450 feet.' 11 September 1899 - Bley drives to the Magnolia Mine with Selwyn, "who thought a great deal of its richness & general appearance & gave Vinson a splendid report of same". Mining Involvement - Washington and Oregon - 53 pages (17 February 1900 - 4 April 1900): Thirty-six pages deal solely with the mining industry, specifically Oregon's Little Giant mine in Jackson county and the Magnolia mine in Washington. A frenzied and impassioned record of seeking evidence and revealing corruption, having discussions with prospectors, mercenaries and tycoons, examining financial options and implications, finally making a decisive move. Replete with financial figures, Bley writes while travelling between Portland, Baker City, Sumpter and the mines. At opposite side of the journal are nine pages of itemized expenses for Bley's activities in Oregon, titled 'Cash a/c trip to Baker City' and 'Expenditure trip to Sumpter & back', and two pages which appear to give transcripts of cables between Bley and the English company for which he seems to have been working as agent in the gold mines affair. Six additional pages of entries relate to the financial aspects of Bley's mining escapades, headed 'Little Giant Mine workings', 'Magnolia position March 1900' (\$39,200 debt), 'Little Giant M Co Meeting'. The latter are interspersed within a thirteen page account of a voyage on the S.S. Ardeola, headed 'Trip to the Canaries 1902'. Journal further contains an assessment, three pages beginning with, "Survey Report Ship Thomasina Maclellan, Captn Joseph W. Sim. Ship having grounded in "Frazer" River Oregon U.S.A. as per log books, on the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th October 1897..." Followed by two-page list of supplies, and a single page at opposite end of the book tallying 'Cash expenses attending Thomas McLellan.'

Letters and certificates

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Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/204032

Unit Date 1892-1902

Mixed Materials Small Collections Box 51 (Box)

Container 2 (folder)

Scope and Contents

The following information was provided by the seller: "Reference letters are from significant shipbuilders, steam navigation companies, and gold mining enterprises. Certificates of Discharge are from various ships, the SS Ranza, SS Kintuck, SS Sagamore, SS Cyclops, SS Laertes, and SS Worsley Hall, and others."